

THE LEISURE HOUR.

BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,
AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND.—*Cowper.*



THE LAST EVENING IN OLD ENGLAND.

STRAIGHT TO THE MARK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BOY AND MAN," "LOMBARDY COURT," ETC.

CHAPTER I.—DARBY AND JOAN.

Then I went to a garden, and did spy
A gallant flower,

The crown imperial. "Sure," said I,

"Peace at the root must dwell."

But when I digg'd, I saw a worm devour

What shew'd so well.

—*George Herbert.*

A SHADY walk in the garden of an old-fashioned many-gabled house in one of the northern

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suburbs of great London. A clear sky overhead, the shadows lengthening out, and the air beginning already to gather freshness after the sultry heat of the day, though the sun is yet visible above the tops of the neighbouring trees and houses. A pleasant summer residence, in marked contrast with the new buildings which surround it, standing in its own grounds, with windows opening to the lawn and a verandah running along one side of it. Foot-passengers, going for a stroll in the summer evening,

PRICE ONE PENNY.

pause for a moment at the iron gate to look in upon the well-kept garden, with its bright array of flowers, and its winding walk, partly concealed from view among the shrubs and roses, and think to themselves how sweet and pleasant it must be to possess such a delightful *rus in urbe*, and what a constant source of enjoyment it must afford its owners. They compare it, perhaps, in their minds with the narrow strips of ground at the back of their own houses, overlooked by all their neighbours, and graced only with a dusty lilac or two, or a bit of ivy to break the straight line of wall, and pass on with a sigh—envious, it may be, of the two figures of whom they catch a glimpse walking pensively with arms entwined across the lawn, and disappearing among the trees.

Envious! of what? All that glitters is not gold; and on the other hand there is a great deal of hidden preciousness in things that glitter not. There may be as much real happiness within the limits of a straight, narrow strip of back garden, where only a few coarse and hardy plants struggle for life among the remains of the contractor's rubbish, brickbats, and lime scraps, as in the choicest parterre. The chief joys of life do not grow out of the localities with which they are associated; they may be enhanced by their surroundings, but they do not depend upon them. A poor man's child will be as happy playing with its block of shapeless wood wound round with rags as any little heiress can be with the most artistic young lady doll that ever was dressed up in silk and embroidery. If that good woman walking by her husband's side, carrying her infant in her arms while he leads the elder child by the hand, could hear what those two in the pleasant garden are talking about, if they could read what is passing in their minds, or even look for a moment into their eyes, they would cease to envy them.

A mother and her son are there: the former still young, though some grey hairs are already visible among the rich dark tresses, which she wears without any covering or ornament. Her features are delicately formed, and her complexion somewhat dark, though just now more than naturally clear and pale; not unhealthy looking, but suggestive of the working of the mind and spirit within. Her deep brown eyes droop thoughtfully, and she turns them from time to time with lingering fondness upon the boy who is walking by her side, his hand clasped in hers. He is not like her; yet one might know instinctively, from the way in which they seem to hold to one another and to reciprocate every impulse, hand to hand and heart to heart, that they are mother and child. He is about twelve years old, tall of his age, and slender; yet his form conveys the idea of strength and vigour, being upright and well-proportioned. He has bright blue eyes, not large, but sparkling with animation, and so full of lively expression that they are by far the most conspicuous feature of his countenance. He looks you in the face, too, when he speaks, not without becoming modesty, but with the simplicity of truth, as one who naturally and of course says what he means and means only what he says. Strangers, perhaps, might think him a little forward, especially when he is in his usual high spirits; but those who know him best will not pronounce him so. He is fair, and altogether well-favoured; more so than he likes; he has often wished that his face were not so smooth and girlish, and he grudges to part with the freckles upon his

nose and forehead which appear sometimes after exposure to the weather, but never remain long. His profile is sharp and delicately cut, with well-shaped ruddy lips smiling in harmony with the twinkling of his eyes; altogether a very pleasant face to look upon, and the more so as one has opportunity to study it and get used to it. One gives him credit instinctively for sincerity and candour, combined with energy and decision of character, as one looks into his eyes, which will not shrink or droop before another person's gaze.

"It will be fine to-morrow, I think," said the boy.

To-morrow was the common subject of their thoughts just then, as they both knew too well. She answered him only by a warmer pressure of her arm around his neck.

"Look at the sunset!" he continued. Then, breaking away suddenly from this common topic, though it was of more than common interest to them both just then, he exclaimed passionately, "Oh, mother, why cannot I?—go with you" he would have added, but the last three words were unspoken, for she checked him with a look. He had asked the same question before, and had received an answer; he had not intended to repeat it, but he was only a child. Why could he not go back with his mother to India? Why must he be separated from her again so soon? That was the question which recurred over and over again, and would not be repressed. His father was in India and he had not seen him for five years or more; he had himself been born there, and all his earliest associations were there. His mother had been at home for a few months only, to see her son, to feast her eyes upon him, to listen to the music of his voice, to gladden her heart with the sweet consciousness of his love, which she had begun to fear would almost be alienated from her after so long absence; above all, to watch the growth of reason and intelligence in his mind, and to cherish the earliest impressions of religion in his soul. Her visit was now drawing to an end. On the morrow she was to sail again for India to rejoin her husband. A cruel lot, it seemed to her, to choose thus between her husband and her child, being constantly separated from one or other of them. Why might not the boy return with her? Why could he not go, if only for a few weeks, that his father also might have his share of the unutterable delight which she had herself experienced in seeing her child? It was decreed in Heaven that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife; but there was no such warrant for a mother separating herself from her son. The boy's passionate inquiry, only half expressed in words, might have been the echo of her own thoughts, an instance of that mysterious and sympathetic communication of mind with mind and heart with heart which seems to be evoked on some occasions of intense and mutual feeling.

"No, Tom, no," she answered him firmly, as she had already answered herself; "no, we must make up our minds to part, and look forward to a future meeting: look forward and look upward." The "upward" did not seem to her at that moment so far distant as the "forward."

"Yes, of course," he answered; "I knew that. I was not thinking what I said. But it need not be so very long before I see you again, mother." He had once more divined her thoughts, apparently. "My father will, perhaps, be able to come home soon."

She shook her head at that suggestion, for she knew it was not probable.

"Well, then, when I go to sea I shall get a berth in a ship bound for Calcutta, and come and see you. I should like so much to go to India again. I remember it so well, and it is always like home to me; more like home than this place, though Mr. and Mrs. Beverley are as kind as they can be, and I am very happy here, as you know; as happy as I could be anywhere away from you."

"You must not think about the sea, Tom," she replied. "Neither your father nor I would choose the sea for you as a profession."

Tom was silent. He had long ago set his heart upon being a sailor; the charm of his first voyage in an East Indiaman to England by long sea dwelt in his memory. He had enjoyed it so much; he had been on such excellent terms with all the ship's company; he had felt so sorry when the vessel reached her destination, and he was handed over to the care of strangers. Mrs. Beverley was his mother's sister, and had engaged to receive the child on his arrival, and to make proper arrangements for him; and she had grown so fond of him that she had kept him with her, giving him a home in her own house, providing for his education, and discharging, as far as possible, all the tender duties of a mother towards him. Thus his life had been rendered almost, or quite, as happy under her roof as it had been in India, or even on the sea. But Tom Howard—that was his name—had never swerved from his resolution, or rather his wish, to be a sailor. He did not aspire to the Royal Navy, though he would have liked that best. Such a ship as he had sailed in from Calcutta, such messmates, such a captain, such a voyage, were all that he desired. And those who knew him best could not but admit that he was well calculated for such a profession. The love of adventure, the quiet courage and determination which he displayed whenever occasion called for it, the cheerful and contented disposition, and, in a word, the whole character and bearing of the lad, seemed to be in accordance with the desire and intention, which he so constantly expressed, of being a sailor.

"Well, mother," he said at length, in answer to her last appeal, "I mean to do everything I can to please you; but I do love the sea. Abbotscliff is near the sea; I shall be able to have a sail sometimes at Abbotscliff. And I have been thinking that I might go just a little of the way with you to-morrow. You will pass Abbotscliff. I might sail down Channel with you and go ashore there. Then instead of leaving you to-morrow, I should stay with you till the last moment, three or four days longer at least, and more than that if the wind were contrary, as perhaps it may be."

Mrs. Howard was more pleased than she would confess, at the idea of keeping her son two or three days longer with her; but she would give him no encouragement until she should have an opportunity of consulting Captain Broad, the commander of the ship *Neptune*, in which she was to make her voyage, not knowing whether it would be possible for him to send a boat ashore at the place indicated. While she was thinking how this could be managed, fearing that she might not have an opportunity of seeing Captain Broad again before the time fixed for the ship's departure, the drawing-room window was opened, and Mrs. Beverley stepped forth upon the lawn, followed by her daughter. A stout, pleasant-

looking woman was Mrs. Beverley, many years older than her sister; and Miss Beverley was in the same ratio older than her cousin Tom. The elder lady had something to say to Mrs. Howard, and took her aside, while Tom attached himself to the younger, and began telling her in earnest tones of the proposal he had just made.

"I want to see Captain Broad," he said, "and to ask him to manage it for me—the going ashore, you know; but I cannot go to the East End of London to-night. I wish I had thought of it before. I am afraid my mother won't agree to it without his consent."

"I dare say not," said Joan—that was Miss Beverley's old-fashioned name; they were all rather old-fashioned people, like their house—"I dare say not; Captain Broad might not be able to put you ashore at Abbotscliff, and then you would have to go on to India instead of going to school."

"I should like that. I wish—" But the wish might not be indulged; he knew that only too well, and the smile faded from his face, leaving the sentence unfinished. On the other hand, the difficulty suggested by his cousin Joan was too serious to be trifled with, and he answered, "I do wish I could see Captain Broad; but I can't leave my mother now. Oh there's Darby!"

"Darby" was the name which Tom had given with saucy familiarity to a gentleman who, though not by any means old-fashioned in his own personal appearance, was known to entertain a very old-fashioned sort of attachment to Joan Beverley. His real name was Darville. He made his appearance now at the drawing-room window, and leaping thence on to the lawn, came directly to Miss Beverley, and took her hand in his. Tom caught him by the arm at the same moment, and told him the subject of their conversation. "What do you think about it, Mr. Darby?" Tom asked.

"I think you are as saucy as ever, Tom," he replied; "and I think it will be taken out of you before you have been long at school."

He was sorry when he had said it, for a shadow passed over the boy's face, though it was but for a moment.

"But about the trip down Channel, Mr. Darville, and about going to see Captain Broad?"

"It is too late; it would take you all the evening."

Tom looked at him wistfully. It seemed very hard that the possibility of such a delightful postponement of the terrible day of parting should be lost only because the idea of it had not occurred to him sooner; but he could not go in search of Captain Broad then.

"Could we not send a note?" he asked. "It would not be the same thing, of course, because I am sure Captain Broad would say 'Yes' if I were to ask him, and he might say 'No' to a letter, without taking time to think about it."

"What are you thinking of, Tom?" Mr. Darville asked, seeing that the boy's eloquent eyes were fixed upon him. "Tell me."

"If you bid me do so again, I will," he replied, "though you would perhaps say, as before, that it was like my impudence."

"Tell me."

"I was thinking that you could perhaps go yourself to see Captain Broad, and that you would do it in a moment if Joan were to ask you."

Mr. Darville had anticipated the first part of the answer, but not the second. The latter, however, seemed to give him the greater pleasure, though he threatened to rub Tom's ears for his impertinence.

"I was obliged to say it, you know," Tom explained, laughing, "because I said I would if you desired it the second time. And it is true, is it not?"

"I don't know about that?"

"Don't you? Then try him, Joan; try him; tell him to go."

"Would it be very inconvenient?" Joan asked, addressing Darville.

"Well, it is a long way. Besides, I had thought of spending a pleasant evening here with you."

"Hardly that, I think," said Joan. "You knew we should be otherwise engaged to-night—the last night."

"That's true," said Darville, who had only come to say good-bye to Mrs. Howard and Tom. "Perhaps I may as well go then."

"Yes; go and see Captain Broad, and get his consent for Tom to go with him down Channel."

"I will, Joan."

"Thank you, Darby."

He was well satisfied with his reward, and after a word or two with Mrs. Howard, went away, followed to the gate by Tom, clinging to him and thanking him again and again, urging him at the same time to tell Captain Broad he must manage it somehow, and give orders to have his berth ready.

They were all made happy that night when Mr. Darville returned. It could easily be managed, the captain said. The pilot would leave the ship and go ashore not far from the place where Tom would have to land, and Tom could go in the pilot's boat. As far as he, Captain Broad, was concerned, he would not mind taking the youngster all the way to Calcutta. His berth should be got ready, and he could go down Channel with them at all events. The captain, it must be told, was an old friend of Mrs. Howard and her son. He had been chief mate of the ship in which they had taken passage from India some years previously, and Tom had kept up his acquaintance with him ever since, going to visit his ship whenever he returned from a voyage. Mrs. Howard had taken her berth in the *Neptune*, of which he was now in command, chiefly for this reason. She agreed to her son's proposal at once. They would be, as he had said, two or three days more together at the least. Two or three days! It was a great gain, coming as it did unexpectedly at the eleventh hour. Her heart felt lighter for it. It was but a putting off of the evil day; but meantime her sorrow was abated. To-morrow was no longer the word of grief and terror which it had been. Mother and son knelt down together that night, and thanked God for the respite, and slept the sounder for it afterwards.

CHAPTER II.—WHO'S WHO.

While I have time and space,
Or that I further in this tale pace
Me thinketh it according to reason
To tellen you alle the condition
Of ech of hem.

—Chaucer

THE house and grounds which Mr. Beverley occupied were known by the name of Mulberry Lawn. A fine old mulberry-tree formed one of the most treasured ornaments of the garden; and to that, of course, the name of the place was generally attri-

buted; but there was another reason: Mr. Beverley was a silk merchant; his father and grandfather had been the same; and they had all resided in that house. They had extensive warehouses in Bread Lane, in the City, which had once been known by the sign of "The Mulberry Tree;" and though the fashion of using signs for such houses of business had ceased to rule, the old board on which the tree had been depicted was still to be seen inside, nailed up over the staircase, though so obscured by time and smoke that it would have been difficult for a stranger to say what it represented. The style of the firm was "Beverley and Darville." The latter name had once been written after the French manner *D'Arville*; for the first partner of that family had been a Frenchman; and even now there were *D'Arvilles* in the south of France, with whom the London firm had intimate relations. But the only real "partner" at the moment when our story begins was Mr. Beverley; "Darville" had been dead two or three years, leaving two sons, who were both engaged in the business, and who expected to be taken in as members of the firm at no distant date. Mr. Beverley was a stout, elderly man of grave and placid countenance, large features, strongly marked, and plentifully fringed with grey hair, the whiskers curling evenly forwards. He was slow and solemn in all his movements, and though he seldom spoke, the expression of his face always led one to conclude that, like a certain famous parrot, he "thought the more." Mr. Beverley was indeed one of those men of whom it might be said that he "looked wiser than it was possible for any one really to be." No one could have supposed that, as he sat by his fireside, his head gently inclining forward, his large eyelids half raised, and his large lips partly opened, that his thoughts were occupied with nothing more important than a threatened disease among silkworms, or the possible depreciation of velvets, or perhaps the introduction of some new dye which might make a sensation in ribbons next season. He understood his business, however, and attended to it with unremitting industry, and had received a good reward for his labour, being a "warm man," as was well known in the City. His late partner, Mr. Darville, had not been so diligent nor so successful; after his death it was found that he had left but little more than sufficient to pay his debts; his wife was dead before him, and his sons were supposed to be already provided for, being, as we have already said, in the counting-house, with a prospect of joining the firm eventually. Mr. Beverley was too honourable a man to depart from his engagements with the sons on account of the extravagance and indiscretion of their father, or he might have wished to place them on a different footing, now that they were left without capital. Victor, the elder, whom we have introduced as Darby, had always been intimate at Mulberry Lawn, and it was understood that he was to marry Joan Beverley. The young people were very much attached to each other, and the old people had agreed long ago that it would be a good thing for both of them. This aspect of the case had undergone a change in consequence of Mr. Darville's impecuniosity; and Mrs. Beverley in particular could not help regretting now that Joan had not been free to exercise a wider choice in matrimony; but it was too late for any interference, and she felt that they must make the best of it. It was stipulated, however, that they must not think of marriage until Victor had been long enough

in the counting-house to satisfy them that he would give his mind to business and show himself worthy to be Mr. Beverley's partner as well as his daughter's. They did "think of it," of course, and behaved as young people usually do under such circumstances. But Victor was as steady and attentive to his duties at the office as could be desired, and Mr. and Mrs. Beverley had every reason to be satisfied with him so far.

Louis Darville, the younger brother, was not in such good repute, but they did not know so much about him or his proceedings. He seldom went to The Lawn, and was not so punctual or diligent in his business habits as he ought to have been. Mr. Beverley did not appear to take much notice of him, as he was supposed to be under his brother, and Victor was in a manner responsible for him. It was a rule with Mr. Beverley not to interfere with the subordinates more than was absolutely necessary; but he kept his large eyelids open, and when he saw anything going wrong would suddenly pounce upon the offender, and give him a severe reprimand once for all, or perhaps even dismiss him without any notice. He was not satisfied with what he saw and heard of Louis Darville, and did not think there was much probability that he would ever be admitted to the position of a partner in the house; but there was nothing to complain of; nothing, at all events, but what his brother was competent to deal with. Louis was, like his late father, more given to pleasure than to work, that was all; he would have to alter his habits if he intended to remain in the counting-house at Bread Lane.

The household at Mulberry Lawn was early astir on the day of Mrs. Howard's departure. She had taken leave of all her neighbours on the previous day. She had not many relatives,—scarcely any besides the Beverleys. She had been married in India, and knew nothing of her husband's family. He had no friends in England, he told her—none, at least, that he should care for her to know. He had always been very reticent about his own connections. Some day, perhaps, he might tell her something, he said; but she had better not ask questions. She had married him for his own sake, not for his belongings; and though she would have liked to make all the friends she could for her boy in England, she had forborne to press the matter with her husband, fearing that he would be annoyed at what might seem to be a want of confidence. Mr. Howard, if the truth must be told, was not the kind of man that any one could be on very easy terms with; he was reserved, gloomy, and morose. He did not enjoy good health, and the Indian climate seemed to have affected his temper as well as his digestion. His wife knew how to please him, but there were certain subjects which she had learnt not to allude to unnecessarily, and this not unimportant question of his family and connections was one of them.

Mr. Beverley took his nephew aside on the day of his departure, and, after looking at him solemnly for a few moments, told him to be a good boy, and to put that in his pocket (a sovereign), and to come home to the Lawn in the holidays; and then bade him good-bye.

Tom thanked him, and thought he ought to offer him a kiss, but could not summon courage to do so. He made up for it, however, when he came to Mrs. Beverley and Joan. At the gate two or three old people were waiting to see them. Miss Beverley had

a district in the parish, and Mrs. Howard had sometimes accompanied her on a visit to the poor. A widow named Raffage had now brought her a parting gift—the widow's mite, she called it—in the shape of a pair of very large, thick, woollen mittens, which she had knitted expressly for her, extra warm, thinking they would be of use to her in them foreign parts. Her son, Dick Raffage, had just been entered as a warehouse boy at Bread Lane, at Victor Darville's instance, and he was present in a new jacket which Mrs. Howard had given him, to show himself and to know if there was "anything as he could fetch or carry."

"Yes," said Tom, giving him a shilling; "carry that."

Tom had a sovereign in his pocket, and could afford to be liberal; but it was rather as a diversion of his own thoughts than from any other motive that he turned towards young Raffage. He could say good-bye to him more easily than to any one else. It was said at last, however, to all of them, and the cab, heavily laden with a few last odds and ends of property, drove off, and left the Beverleys, with the Raffages and two or three servants, standing in the road looking after them. Tom had his mother with him still for a little while, and they clasped each other's hands tightly, as they sat side by side, without speaking.

JOTTINGS BY A BOOKWORM.

THE bookworm, I believe, is a small creature that burrows into books. I have an old copy of "La Bruyère" in three volumes, each of which has its leaves perforated, from the first to the last, with neat round holes—the work of the bookworm. The name is applied metaphorically to a human being who is much given to poring over books. Perhaps none of Sir Walter Scott's charming stories is more delightful than "Guy Mannering," with its fresh and picturesque scenery, its stirring incidents, and its inimitably natural and living characters. One of these—among the author's very best—is the immortal bookworm, Dominie Sampson. Who does not recollect the description of him? How he "was a good listener, and stirred the fire with some address. He attempted even to snuff the candles, but was unsuccessful, and relinquished that ambitious post of courtesy, after having twice reduced the parlour to total darkness." What is there more humorous to be found anywhere than his encounter and dinner with Meg Merrilies? And how graphic the picture of him in the library:—"He often opened a volume when half-way up the library-steps, fell upon some interesting passage, and, without shifting his inconvenient posture, continued immersed in the fascinating perusal, until the servant pulled him by the skirts to assure him that dinner waited. He then repaired to the parlour, bolted his food down his capacious throat in squares of three inches, answered aye or no at random to whatever question was asked at him, and again hurried back to the library as soon as his napkin was removed, and sometimes with it hanging round his neck like a pinafore."

Perhaps there is no personage in the whole range of fiction with whom I have so much sympathy as with Dominie Sampson. Books are as my meat and drink.

I spend most of my time in a little room pretty well lined on three sides with books, and when I take my walks abroad some instinct leads me most often where I may still look upon books. I am fortunate in living within easy distance of Holborn, Oxford Street, and the Strand, these being the thoroughfares in or near which are to be found the greatest number of bookshops—the only shops that have any attraction for me—especially those which have a number of volumes exposed outside the door. How often have I stood five, ten, twenty minutes, and longer still, enjoying something I did not quite care to buy, but could not deny myself the pleasure of devouring hastily or partially. In that wonderful story of “A Voyage to the Moon,” by Edgar Poe, the bellows-mender of Rotterdam tells us how he fell in at a bookstall with a work on astronomy which inspired him with the idea he afterwards carried out. But what struck my attention was the fact that a chair was provided for the accommodation of customers, or readers, an institution which I have never seen at any London bookstall, though it would often have been exceedingly welcome.

One cannot but notice the miscellaneous character of the assemblage of books on a stall. And here recurs the often remarked analogy between books and men. The bookseller ranks his books as he would his customers. The best bound, and those which are worth most money, are stowed safely within. Those with fading exteriors, and those that do not “go off” quickly, such as Greek and Latin classics, and school-books generally, theological, philological, and scientific works by less known authors, are put outside. It is amusing to observe how in many cases the books come down in appearance and price in exact proportion to their distance from the shop door—the best being nearest, and at the extreme end a melancholy heap of the paupers and outcasts of the book world. It is piteous to imagine the downward career of a valuable book until at last it reposes in the penny box. Here may be found many a book which has lost its jacket, though not its brains. That rare spirit and lover of books, Dr. Oliver Wendel Holmes, in his last “breakfast-table” book, describes his mode of dealing with his “crippled” books. If a volume had lost one of its covers—the fine old brown binding, perhaps, of the last century—he would look out another as like it as possible from an old lot, and taking one of its covers, supply with it the deficiency of the first. He tells us the remarkable things he found in one or two old books he got for nothing for this purpose, and wonders why we keep calling for new books when there is so much valuable matter lying neglected. The time may be out of joint in many respects, but for one thing I am devoutly thankful—the abundance and cheapness of books. We can hardly now conceive the condition of the middle ages, when a book was purchased with an estate. And though the deluge of trash is as great as ever, a stream of sterling literature is steadily flowing to counteract it. Above all it is pleasant to see the innumerable reprints of standard English authors. There must be a very large class sufficiently educated to wish for some acquaintance with these, and it is to be hoped that as the knowledge of them permeates the community a corresponding elevation of taste and feeling may result.

There is no better illustration to be found of the economical maxim that a thing is worth what it will fetch than the prices of second-hand books. Many

a time have I turned homewards rejoicing, with a treasure in my pocket or under my arm, gladly parted with by the dealer “for an old song”—whatever may be the origin of that phrase. It was worth little or nothing to others, but much to me. The indifference of the public is the opportunity of the bookworm (apothegm after the manner of the late Lord Lytton). In this way I picked up a fine octavo “Iliad,” in noble type, with Heyne’s notes, for sixpence. Only a few days ago I secured Matthiæ’s famous Greek Grammar, in two volumes, for eightpence. Some time back I met with the “Enchiridion of Epictetus,” and the “Characters of Theophrastus,” with other standard pieces, in one volume,—evidently a choice edition—for ninepence; it was worth the money if only to have the beautiful type to look at.

Now and then one meets with singular books. I once lighted on a curious and clever thing, entitled, “Heliondè; or, Adventures in the Sun.” It is the story of a gentleman who spent an unusually hot summer at a hydropathic establishment, drinking water and bathing till, falling asleep one day out-of-doors, his body, already much reduced by the *regimen*, became, through the sun’s rays, attenuated into vapour, though still retaining the human shape, and was at length drawn up from the earth by the same power, and onward, along a brilliant road of sunbeams, till he was finally landed in the sun. A detailed account follows of the wonders of this new world, displaying very vivid imagination, great inventive ingenuity, considerable literary and scientific knowledge, and not a little satirical humour. The visitor to the sun was greatly struck at first by finding that the light came from *below* instead of above, as on earth. The arrangements consequent on this are ingeniously described. The inhabitants were of ethereal nature, and lived not on solid food, but on odours, extracted from the flowers of the sun. A dinner would consist of a variety of these perfumes, served in phials. Here is a description of Heliopolis, the capital of the sun:—“Spread out in vast dimensions was a metropolis which would have covered an area of nearly all Europe, built entirely of the beautiful minica (a material made from solidified air), and blending every conceivable colour in soft radiations, while palace after palace, dome above dome, minaret upon minaret, cupolas rivaling cupolas, rose glistening in the bright and buoyant air of the sun, the refulgent rays of whose light were here and there reflected back into double magnificence by peculiar glossy and shining clouds, which floated over the city like recumbent and benignant genii of the place.”

This is the stranger’s first meeting with an inhabitant of the sun:—

“Permit me to ask from what world you have come?” said he.

“From earth.”

“From what country?”

“England,” I replied, rather pompously.

“Upon this he took from one of his followers a sort of tablet—evidently a list of heavenly spheres—and, running his eye over it, muttered, ‘Earth: small star, with a moon; inhabitants eat flesh. Mostly warlike and fierce; cruel to animals; land and water, atmosphere of its own.’ Here he stopped as if satisfied that these few remarks classified the world from which I came.” It should be mentioned that speech in the sun was musical. After seeing many

wonderful things, and going through some strange adventures, the traveller returns to the earth in as incomprehensible a manner as he had left it.

Though, as a true bookworm, it is mainly for their contents that I regard books, yet I am not altogether indifferent to their outsides. I am especially fond of good editions of standard authors, and I know no more tempting spectacle than the window of a first-class bookseller. The *very* sumptuous editions, however, suggest that they are more likely to remain in their dignity on the library shelves than frequently to open their pages to their owner. Still, one likes to see the great writers worthily arrayed. The way in which books are "got up" now exhibits a wide variety of taste, some very good, much very bad. Attractiveness of appearance is, no doubt, a point of importance in a large class of books, but there is in general too much of gaudy ornamentation—a striving to catch purchasers by the eye, as if the public, like children, must be enticed by a pretty cover. Indeed, as on the stage, the scene-painter now divides the honours with the dramatist, so the binder and gilder come, in a manner, into competition with the author.

Books, by virtue of the wonderful *life* that is in them, carry us back into the past, till we stand in spirit among the men of the old generations. Does the reader know that extraordinary book, that quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy"? It was the only book, Dr. Johnson said, that could make him rise two hours earlier than he wished. Burton is the prince of bookworms. His great book is made up, almost entirely, from other books. No other English author has quoted so largely and so aptly. He professes to treat of Melancholy: its kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and cures. In pursuing this subject, he quotes from an immense number of authors, and brings in a vast and varied quantity of recondite and most entertaining matter. Wood says, "'Tis a book so full of variety of reading, that gentlemen who have lost their time, and are put to a push for invention, may furnish themselves with matter for common or scholastical discourse and writing." And many such gentlemen have availed themselves of it accordingly. Sterne's plagiarisms, in particular, have been fully exposed. Not a few writers and talkers have passed for great scholars by the aid of Burton's book, condensing, as it does, an enormous mass of reading into a volume. He quotes the ancient authors, and the more obscure writers of later ages. His book has been called "the delight of the learned, the solace of the indolent, and the refuge of the uninformed." Burton's own share of the work, however, his original writing, is full of wit and energy. In reading old books, how often are we surprised at finding in a long by-gone period the features of our own day: take, for instance, this passage, in which Burton speaks of himself and his mode of life:—

"I live still a collegiate student, as Democritus in his garden, and lead a monastic life, sequestered from those tumults and troubles of the world; and as if stationed on a watch-tower, in some high place above you all, I hear and see what is done abroad; how others run, ride, turmoil and macerate themselves in court and country, far from those wrangling lawsuits, I laugh at all, without care lest my suit go amiss, my ships perish, corn and cattle miscarry, trade decay. I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for. A mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and how they act their

parts, which methinks are diversely presented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene. I hear new news every day, and those ordinary rumours of war, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions; of towns taken, cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, etc.; daily musters, and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwrecks, piracies, and sea-fights; peace leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarms. A vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, laws, proclamations, complaints, grievances, are daily brought to our ears. New books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, etc. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubilees, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, plays; then again, as in a new-shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villainies in all kinds, funerals, burials, deaths of princes, new discoveries, expeditions, now comical, then tragical matters. To-day we hear of new lords and officers created, to-morrow of some great men deposed, and then again of fresh honours conferred; one is let loose, another imprisoned; one purchaseth, another breaketh; he thrives, his neighbour turns bankrupt; now plenty, then again dearth and famine; one runs, another rides, wrangles, laughs, weeps, etc. Thus I daily hear, and such like both private and public news, amidst the gallantry and misery of the world; jollity, pride, perplexities, and cares, simplicity and villainy; subtlety, knavery, candour, and integrity, mutually mixed, and offering themselves."

Is this a picture of two hundred and fifty years ago; or, with scarcely an alteration, of the time we are living in?

The modern bookworm must ever feel a kindly sympathy with the great book-lovers of former days. Chief among them we must rank the immortal Petrarch, to whom we owe the preservation of so many of the Latin classics. He devoted himself with the utmost ardour to the task of rescuing these great works from perishing through the ignorance and neglect of the times. "On many occasions," he says, "when I met strangers, and they asked what I desired from their country, 'Nothing,' I replied, 'but the works of Cicero.' And frequently was this request repeated, when I sent money, not into Italy only, where I was best known, but into France, and Germany, and Spain, and Britain, and as far as Greece. Thus I obtained some small volumes, but seldom such as I most anxiously sought. . . . When travelling, if at a distance I descried some ancient monastery, to it I turned my steps. Haply, thought I, I may there find what I most want."

He also eagerly collected the works of the famous Greek writers, though, to his great regret, he did not succeed in acquiring the language sufficiently to enjoy their beauties. When a present of a Greek Homer was sent him from Constantinople, he wrote: "Your present of the original text of the divine poet is worthy of yourself and me. Yet your liberality is imperfect: with Homer you should have given me yourself—a guide who could lead me into the fields of light, and disclose to me the wonders of the Iliad and Odyssey. For, alas! Homer is dumb, or I am

deaf; nor is it in my power to enjoy the treasure which I possess. I have placed him by the side of Plato—the prince of poets—near the prince of philosophers; and I glory in the sight of my illustrious guests. Of their immortal writings, whatever had been translated into the Latin idiom I had already acquired; but, if there be no profit, there is some pleasure in beholding these venerable Greeks in their proper and national habit. I am delighted with the aspect of Homer; and as often as I embrace the silent volume, I exclaim with a sigh, Illustrious bard! with what pleasure should I listen to thy song, if my sense of hearing were not obstructed."

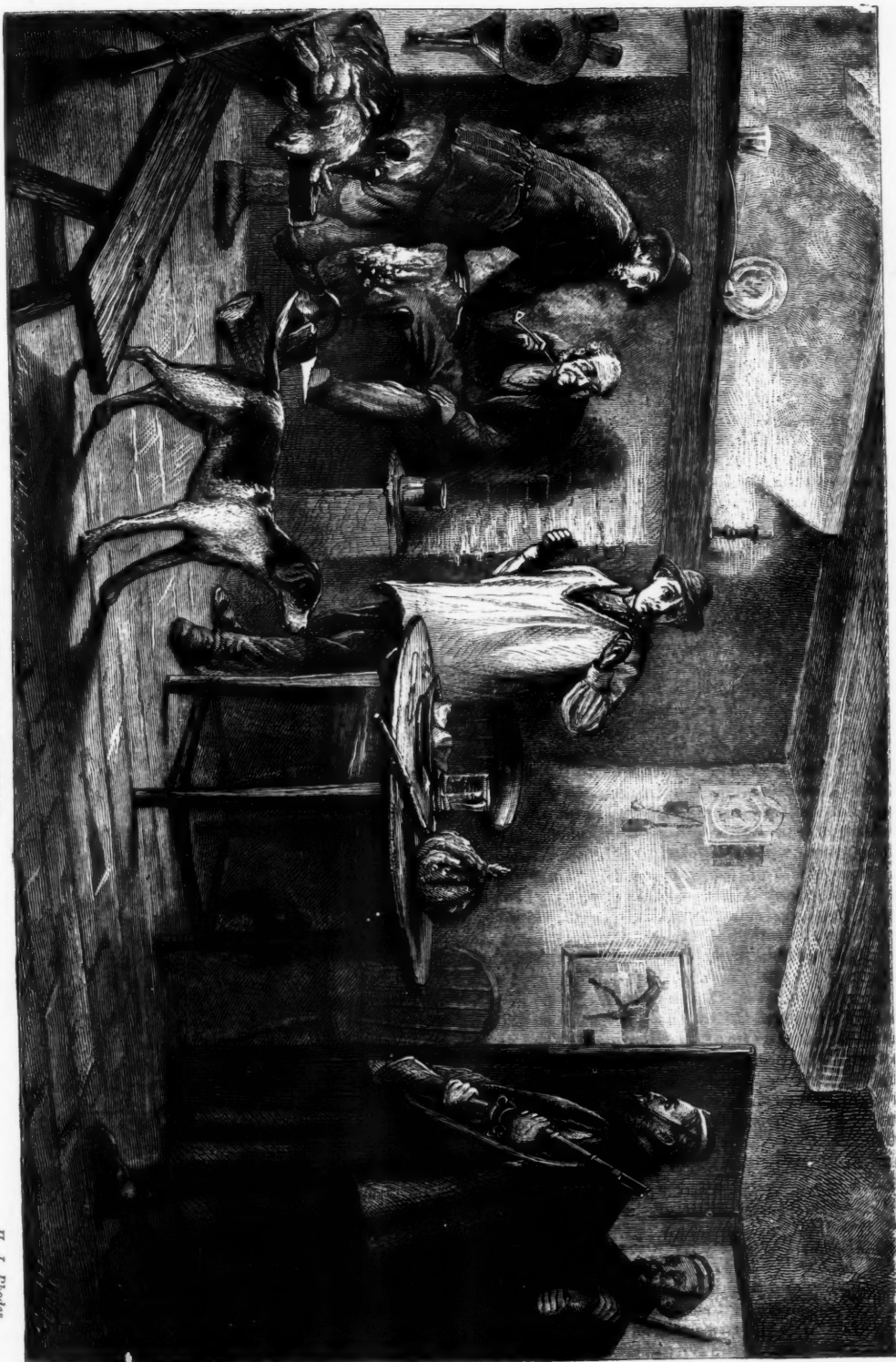
This great man transcribed many works with his own hand. He lived about a hundred years before the invention of printing.

Another book-collector deserving of mention is Mathias Corvinus, King of Hungary. He built a tower in his capital city, Buda, and lodged in it fifty thousand volumes, bound in vellum and gold or silver. He appointed thirty amanuenses to be constantly employed in copying and illuminating them. When Buda was taken by the Turks, the barbarians destroyed or damaged most of the books, tearing off the rich covers, with their silver bosses and clasps. One book, picked up by a Hungarian soldier, and preserved for the gold and ornaments of its cover, was a manuscript of the celebrated Greek romance, "The Adventures of Theagines and Chariclea," by Heliodorus, Bishop of Tricca, in Thessaly. This work is very interesting, as being the oldest prose fiction now extant, except those which survive in the epitomes of Photius. It has been highly popular, and imitated by many subsequent romancers. Raphael painted two pictures from it. It is also valuable as giving much antiquarian information about Egypt, where the scene is laid. It was first printed in 1534, at Basil, from this manuscript. Leigh Hunt says he met with a translation of it on a bookstall in Chelsea for tenpence. By such accidents have ancient books come down to us. But how poignant the regret with which one thinks of the treasures of antiquity that have perished irrecoverably; the list of more than thirty lost works of Plutarch, for example, of which Dryden says that the reader peruses it with the feelings of a merchant who scans his bill of freight after his vessel has gone down. Especially exasperating is the loss when caused by the sottishness of barbarian conquerors, as in the lamentable case of the Alexandrian Library, destroyed by order of the Saracen Caliph Omar. Ockley, in his "History of the Saracens," tells us that a certain learned man, "perceiving the great respect shown him by Amrou (the general), ventured one day to petition him for the books in the Alexandrian Library, telling him 'That he perceived he had taken an account of all things which he thought valuable in the city, and sealed up all the repositories and treasures, but had taken no notice of the books; that if they would have been anyway useful to him, he would not have been so bold as to ask for them, but since they were not, he desired he might have them.' Amrou told him 'That he had asked a thing which was altogether out of his power to grant, and that he could by no means dispose of the books without first asking the caliph's leave. However,' he said, 'he would write and see what might be done in the matter.' Accordingly, he performed his promise, and having given a due character of the abilities of this learned man, and acquainted Omar with his petition, the caliph re-

turned this answer: 'What is contained in these books you mention is either agreeable to what is written in the Book of God (meaning the Koran), or it is not; if it be, then the Koran is sufficient without them; if otherwise, it is fit they should be destroyed.' Amrou, in obedience to the caliph's command, distributed the books throughout all the city, amongst those that kept warm baths (of which there were at that time no fewer than four thousand in Alexandria), to heat the baths with. And notwithstanding the great havoc that must needs be made of them at this rate, yet the number of books which the diligence of former princes had collected was so great, that it was six months before they were consumed. A loss never to be made up to the learned world!"

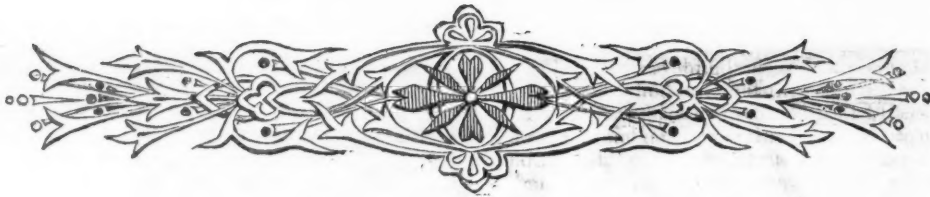
A library is the bookworm's paradise. Such might be the great reading-room at the British Museum, did not the multitude of "readers" and the bustle of the attendants render it anything but a still retreat for the scholar and the student. As far as the books go, however, it is perfect. On entering, you are immediately sensible of the delicious odour of Russian leather. The wall is a great circle of books, and out of sight are myriads more. But the excessive multiplication of books has become a serious hindrance to study. The learner is perplexed and misled. Selection is imperative. A guide to books is sadly wanted. I remember reading in that marvellous romance, "Monte Christo," how the old Abbé said to his fellow-prisoner that he thought all ascertained knowledge might be acquired by perusing some hundred and fifty well-selected volumes. As for history, however, and literature proper, Emerson, in his capital essay on "Books," passes in review the chief books of the world—the great productions of the human mind in successive ages—which have been weighed and not found wanting, and which have been transmitted as a priceless possession to our time. "'Tis an economy of time," he says, "to read old and famed books. Nothing can be preserved which is not good. . . . Be sure, then, to read no mean books. Shun the spawn of the press on the gossip of the hour. The scholar knows that the famed books contain, first and last, the best thoughts and facts."

I will bring this rigmarole to an end with an anecdote showing the value set upon a rare and famous book. In 1812 the Duke of Roxburgh's library was sold by auction. The sale lasted forty-two days. One of the choicest items was an edition of "Boccaccio," published by Valdarfer at Venice, in 1471. This was the only perfect copy. It was bid for by Earl Spencer and the Marquis of Blandford, afterwards Duke of Marlborough. At last Earl Spencer said, "A thousand guineas." "And ten," added the marquis. Amid great excitement the rivalry proceeded till the marquis bid two thousand pounds. After some consultation with his son, Lord Althorp, Earl Spencer raised his offer to two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. The company were astounded. "And ten," calmly added the marquis. There was no further bid. The hammer fell. "The stroke of its fall sounded," says Emerson, "on the farthest shores of Italy. The tap of that hammer was heard in the libraries of Rome, Milan, and Venice. 'Boccaccio' stirred in his sleep of five hundred years, and M. Van Praet groped in vain among the royal alcoves in Paris to detect a copy of the famed Valdarfer 'Boccaccio.'"



THE DESERTER DISCOVERED.

H. J. Riodes.



HANSTEEN'S TRAVELS IN SIBERIA.

CHAPTER IX.—VISIT TO THE KIRGHIS KHAN.

ACCOMPANIED by Karelin, in whose house during two months we had met with the most unvarying hospitality, we again resumed our pilgrimage. Karelin travelled in a capacious sledge with the khan's interpreter, a robust Russian, who understood the Kirghis language; and we were in our britzka, which was on wheels, as was also our baggage-waggon. The road follows the course of the River Oural. Along the banks of the river, which abound in fish, are several forts and redoubts, guarded by Cossacks of the Oural. They serve as outposts between the two savage hordes of Kirghises, who lead a nomad life on the vast steppes to the east of the river. An escort of armed Cossacks was necessary. On the 20th and 21st we rested in the pretty town of Ouralsk, where these Cossacks dwell.

The Kirghises are divided into three tribes: the Great, the Middle, and the Lesser. After the Russians had conquered Siberia these people were at first regarded as a source of annoyance by the southern settlers, being distinguished as plunderers, by a spirit of revolt, and by perfidy and cruelty. As early as 1806 the Kirghises, and also the Barabinses, were subject to Russia, but the character of these tribes rendered their fidelity doubtful. Even to this day the Great horde lead a wandering life beyond the frontiers of the Russian Empire, and as for the two Lesser hordes, they became so turbulent that at the beginning of the eighteenth century they, as well as the Soongares, were relegated to Siberia, where they made a conquest of the steppes to the east of the Oural, which they possess to this day. In 1731 the khan of the Lesser horde, Abdul-Khair, voluntarily sought the protection of Russia against the oppressions of the Soongares, and in 1738 the oath of fidelity was solemnly taken. The following year the Middle horde followed their example.

The great-grandfather of the khan, who still dwells to the south of the Oural, is celebrated as the author of a history of his nation, which is translated into several European languages. Owing to disputes with other tribes, his son, at the close of the last century, passed to the west side of the Oural with 40,000 followers, and received permission from Catherine II to settle on the desert steppe which separates the Oural and the Volga, where the tribe continue to lead their nomadic life. Russia carries on an advantageous trade with these wanderers, who dispose of their raw products in exchange for articles of little value. The government feared their turbulent character, and wishing to prevent their quitting the steppe, abandoned to the Cossacks of the Oural a large tract of land between the river and a part of the steppe given up to the Kirghises, whose privileges they were not to infringe. At the commencement of this century the latter beginning to perceive that they no longer enjoyed their ancient independence,

loaded their camels with their kibitkes, with the intention of crossing the Oural. The emigrants met a party of well-armed Cossacks on their route, and, as they possessed scarcely any means of resistance, after exchanging some blows they returned to their deserted region and remained peaceful.

The River Oural is full of fish, particularly the sturgeon, of which there are two kinds. The sturgeon ascend the River Oural from the Caspian Sea, in order to deposit their eggs, of which the *caviare* is made. The gains of the Cossacks quite depend on the taking of this fish, and there are some who have made out of it 40,000 roubles, and even more. The wife of a rich Cossack wears in her festival costume a head-dress of the shape of a helmet, covered with precious stones of the value, perhaps, of 1,000 roubles. The Cossack officer at whose house we passed the 21st and 22nd showed us one of these head-dresses.

Being informed that the winter fishery was on the point of commencing near the advanced post Mergenev, we went there to witness it, and found many Cossack sledges laden with white poles of various lengths. We counted about 4,000 Cossacks, and on the bank of the river there was a 12-pounder gun. At 9 a.m. the commanding Cossack officer caused the cannon to be fired, as a signal that the fishing had begun. The Cossacks then crowded to a part of the river where they knew the fish abounded, and formed four lines, three hundred or four hundred paces apart. They hollowed out the ice with iron wedges, and at regular distances scooped round holes of about one foot diameter, two or three Cossacks to each hole. Baited fish-hooks were thrust down about one foot from the surface. The white poles placed across the river frightened the fish, which attempted to escape on either side. The Cossacks now turned the sticks in their hands, so that the points penetrated the body of the fish.

If the holes were not large enough to allow the bodies of the sturgeon to pass through, they enlarged the apertures with their pickaxes, whilst the first captors endeavoured to draw them along under the ice. Whether taken by their heads or by their tails, they required the strength of three men to drag them through. In less than two hours, the officer told me that these men had caught fish of the value of 400,000 roubles! A number of merchants, in their sledges, collect together on the ice, and they purchase the largest fish for ready money, and carry them off immediately to St. Petersburg and Moscow. The Russians do not esteem the *caviare*—that is to say, the eggs—if they are more than eight days old. Each egg is of the size of an ordinary pea, transparent, with a little grey spot on one side; they are thrown into a tub, sprinkled with fine salt, then very carefully turned, so as not to injure them, and after this preparation they are eaten with chopped onions.

The caviare is served at the table of wealthy Russians. The sort sold in other countries is taken from a smaller kind of sturgeon, which have eggs no larger than small shot. They are strongly salted, and of a greenish colour, a little rancid, and do not at all resemble the caviare obtained from larger fish.

The commanding officer wished to persuade some Cossacks to give us two fish-hooks to try our luck, but we declined to accept this politeness on their part. Our interpreter, Gustav, however, less scrupulous, set to work, and was fortunate to hook a fish of the value of fifty roubles. He had the discretion to yield it up to the owner of the fish-hook for a smaller-sized fish, which he immediately sold to a trader for twenty-five roubles.

This fish is white underneath, from which it derives the name of *hjeluga*, or white fish. The largest we saw were from six to eight feet long, and of the thickness of a man's body. The price of such a fish is sometimes as high as two hundred roubles; it has a long and pointed nose, and a capacious under-jaw. The esterlet, of much smaller size, is from one foot to one foot and three-quarters long. Its flesh is yellowish, and it is luscious and very delicate. It is equally met with in the rivers which flow into the Arctic Ocean, such as the Obi and the Jenisei. The fishing ended, some Cossack officers are deputed to present the best fish to the Emperor at St. Petersburg; an audience is granted to this deputation, of which the chief personage receives a silver-gilt drinking-cup filled with money. Our host at Oural'sk showed us three of these cups, which he had received on different occasions. The only objection to be made to this custom was, that the etiquette of the Court obliged him to shave off his habitually long beard, from which cause he had continual toothache until his beard grew again.

We now left the river, and drove three days across the steppe, towards the south-east, passing by three Cossack stations, standing isolated on this vast plain. On the 26th January we halted at the last station, Glinanui, placed on the borders of the steppe given up to the Kirghises. These stations are only mud huts hollowed out of the earth; not a tree, not a shrub, exists on the steppe! To warm themselves these tribes make use of reeds and rushes for fuel, which grow in moist places, and of cow-dung. The soil is salt everywhere, so that the water of the springs is not even drinkable for horses and cows. Fresh water is obtained by melting snow, of which a store is kept in each courtyard, on a cart. In the summer rain-water is collected. The wings of the houses are built up with rushes and branches of palms plaited together. We remained six days, whilst Karelin preceded us to announce our arrival to the khan. This interval was devoted partly to our scientific occupations, partly to visits made to the lieutenant in command. He spoke Russian only, but his wife understood French; and in this fashion we got on pretty well. The visit of a stranger on the Kirghis Steppe is an event which occurs, perhaps, but once during a century!

The Governor Essem had written to the khan to aid us in our journey across the steppe as far as Astrakan. The khan, on his side, directed his brother to accompany us across it, with two kabitkes and the necessary number of camels to transport them. The uncle of the khan, and his brother, who dwelt near the station, came to visit us every day—to chat, to

consult us, and to inquire what we wished done. They placed themselves on a carpet, crossed their legs, and drank tea with us. The conversation often languished, for they did not speak Russian better than we did. One day we went to visit the uncle, who lived in a wooden hut, and we had the good fortune to see his wife in all her splendour. She wore a red velvet dress and a head-dress ornamented with pearls. Her mother, who could not accustom herself to new fashions nor to the confined air of a shut-up house, lived all the year round in her kikitke, where we found her seated on cushions.

During our stay an incident made us acquainted with the strictness of the Kirghis customs. A young woman is not permitted to let a man behold her face—even though he be a member of her own family—her father only excepted. When she becomes old she is free to show it. It therefore follows that a man may not see his daughter-in-law, nor the wife of his nephew, nor the wife of a younger brother, though he is allowed to look at his aunt and at the wife of his uncle. Upon a wish being expressed by us during a visit to the sultan, he was good enough to order his two daughters and his daughter-in-law to attire themselves in their festal garments, and to place themselves at the end of a kikitke. To our great surprise, whilst we penetrated into the sanctuary, he himself remained outside. Later, Lieutenant Due called upon him to draw his likeness in grand costume, and on this occasion expressed the wish to paint a portrait of his daughter-in-law also. As she did not understand Russian he begged her father-in-law to be present to act as interpreter. "It is impossible," replied the sultan; "our customs do not permit us to see a daughter-in-law!" and he had never in his life beheld her. The matter was difficult to arrange, for an artist always has little directions to give to his sitter—sometimes to turn her head, or it may be to alter her pose. After various consultations an expedient was devised. The sultan caused a large curtain to be hung up, which divided his room into two parts. His niece was placed on a chair on one side of the curtain, with Mr. Due at a convenient distance, whilst the father-in-law, stationed on the other side of the curtain, fulfilled the office of interpreter. When Due said, "Ask your daughter-in-law to turn her head more to the left," the sultan repeated the request in Kirghisian. On a subsequent occasion the khan's wife, hearing that Due had brought a portrait of her husband's uncle, begged he would lend it her that she might have some idea of the features of her relation.

In Russia one finds many sects of the Greek religion. Amongst these is one whose members style themselves "Starié veri," or "ancient believers." They have very rigid rules, and, amongst other singularities, are forbidden to use tobacco, which, according to their idea, profanes not only the man who smokes it, but pollutes the room in which this impious occupation has taken place. The people who shared the accommodation of the station with us belonged to this sect. On seeing us smoke in our little room, they conceived such an aversion for us and for our servants that they no longer allowed them to make use of the same vessel that they employed for bringing up the water. They gave us another, promising themselves to destroy it at our departure, and our apartment was to be purified and sprinkled with holy water before it could be occupied by any one else. Captain Cochrane relates in his

travels that, entering once to light his pipe in the dwelling of a Siberian peasant of this sect, the mistress of the house took up a piece of wood and gave him such a blow on his back that he ran away alarmed; the blows were repeated even outside the house. He did not understand the compliments offered him in such a language! I must acknowledge that they were scarcely more courteous to us.

A Kirghis courier soon arrived on horseback, bringing a polite communication from the khan, written in Russian. As one has not often the opportunity of reading a letter written by a nomad prince, I translate the document literally:—

"Affectionate Lord Christoforo Christophorovitch, —Having learnt that you, affectionate lord, with Lieutenant Due, have resolved to traverse the steppe which is subject to me as far as Astrakan, I earnestly invite you to take the road to my residence in your journey to that town. Not only will it be agreeable to you to lighten the fatigue of this long journey, but I shall be pleased to make your personal acquaintance. To facilitate this I have directed my brother, the Sultan Tauke Bukeyevski, to furnish you with kibitkes (tents), guides—in short, with all may be useful to you in travelling here.

"Whilst expecting your arrival, receive the assurance of my devotion and of my esteem, with the extreme honour that I feel to be,

"Affectionate lord,

"Your very humble servant,

"DSCHANGER,

"Sandy Plain of Dschaskus."

The khan's seal was heart-shaped, and bore the following inscription: "Petschat Chana Dschangera Bukeyeva," or "Seal of the Khan Dschanger Bukeyevski." Within the border there were Arabic characters, probably of the same signification.

The Sultan Tauke sent four camels, laden with wooden framework fittings, felt carpets, cushions, and coverlids from Bokhara, for the two kibitkes in which we were to pass the night during our journey. The evening of our departure from the station the camels were sent on with the kibitkes to a distance of seventy versts. The next morning we accompanied the sultans in two sledges, leaving our carriages in charge of the Cossacks to bring them on slowly to the khan's palace. It is difficult for a traveller to find his way in winter, or to reach a given point, especially when seventy versts off, the steppe being as smooth as a sea of glass, and neither house, tree, nor shrub to mark his progress, no high ground nor lofty object intervening. If overtaken by a whirlwind of snow one is in danger of perishing, every track being effaced, and not a place of refuge to take shelter in. The khan's interpreter related to us that one day, whilst crossing the steppe, he was overtaken by a whirlwind. In order to save his life he took refuge in one of the stacks of hay, which are not rare on the steppe, and which the Kirghises reserve here and there to supply provender for their cattle during the winter. To attain the summit of the heap he stood on his horse, and then gradually sank into it, closing up any aperture left at the top. He remained burrowed in it all night, and, fortunately for him, the snowstorm ceased in the morning.

If a traveller in journeying have left some trace or indication of his route, it is resolutely followed. If there be none, the sledge halts, and a Cossack is sent on to the right, and one to the left, to advance gently on the snow to discover which part is the hardest.

If a good path be found, the traveller is immediately informed and the sledge proceeds. The Cossacks and the Kirghises are so much accustomed to this manner of travelling that they are rarely at fault. Even the horses seem to possess the same sort of instinct. When one of them feels that the snow beneath his feet is becoming softer, he comprehends that he has left the track, and he pushes the horse harnessed at his side back again. There is as much necessity to use the mariner's compass on the steppe as at sea. We were generally disquieted, I must acknowledge, every time that it became needful to trace our route in this manner. At length, in the evening, we arrived at the spot agreed upon. It was near a marsh, where we found the rushes very convenient to furnish a fire by which to warm ourselves. Our camels had already arrived; some Kirghis women ran out of their tents to help us set up ours; a large carpet was fastened round it, an opening being left to let the smoke pass out on the side where the wind did not blow. In the interior of the tent rushes were thickly strewn upon the snow to the depth of several inches, and over these carpets were spread. In the centre of the tent a free space was left, where a fire, made of rushes, was lit. Cushions, which served as seats, over which a variegated Bokhara carpet was placed, were arranged on one side. Half an hour after our arrival our kibitkes were ready to receive us. We found our Kirghises squatted round the fire warming themselves; Neilsen, our servant, was near the door, with his *samovar* filled with snow, boiling the water for our tea; Gustav preparing some sturgeon for our supper. We soon enjoyed our tea and smoked our pipes. This nomad life was really not without its charm.

We passed into the other kibitke to see our people at their meal. They were all squatted in a circle round the fire, their meat was drawn out of the flesh-pot, torn with their fingers, and served in wooden porringers. They ate the meat they seized without either bread or salt. Each time that a man had half picked a bone he made a present of it, over his head, to a Kirghis woman behind him, who finished it! The meat hastily devoured, the bowls were given to the cook, who replenished them with soup. The soup, not having been skimmed, was of a greyish colour. A similar repast forms the daily nourishment of the Kirghises, who, after having enjoyed such a feast, remain twenty-four hours without eating. After our own meal, we threw ourselves on the mattresses, our feet against the fire and our heads against the wall of the tent. The carpet surrounding it came well down to the ground, and the snow outside having been heaped up to a height of several feet, no wind could enter. A Kirghis watched the fire all night, throwing occasionally on it several loads of rushes and rounds of dried cowdung, which added greatly to the intensity of the heat. The next morning, after a sound and peaceful sleep and a good breakfast, we were ready to start, and the kibitkes were taken to pieces. The Kirghis women came flocking out again, took off the accumulation of frost on the outside carpets, rolled them up in bundles, and loaded the camels with them, together with the wooden tent-frames.

The sultans had brought two extra horses with them. After journeying some distance, Sultan Tauke had one of these horses saddled to enjoy a ride, for variety's sake. When he had satisfied this fancy I felt a wish to do the same. I gave the other

horse to Gustav, and we took rather a long ride. When the Kirghises wish to put their horses to their fullest speed they utter a peculiar sharp sound. The sultans took it in their head to utter this cry to furnish me with an opportunity of displaying my skill as an equestrian. The horses set off with extraordinary impetuosity, and although all the Kirghis horses are very surefooted, this awkward joke might have easily cost a man's life. I went to the side of the first sledge; Gustav was between them both; we found it impossible to stop our headlong course. Soon I heard a cry—Gustav had fallen; the sledge, which was close upon him, had passed over his body, and I expected to find him dead. To my great astonishment, he rose, looked around him, half frightened, half surprised, as though to assure himself that he was still alive. The sledge-horses, according to their usual habit, had avoided putting their feet on him, and as he was fortunately extended along the track where the sledge had been, it had but slightly grazed him. I, however, could not conceal the anger that I felt. I said to the old sultan, in the best Russian I could command, that I thought I had to do with staid, sensible persons, but that they had acted like madcap boys! Gustav had had enough of his horse, but I remained on mine until we came to an isolated house, inhabited by a Tartar merchant, about seven versts from the khan's residence. Here we sent a note to Karelin, dressed, and took some tea. Karelin arrived in a magnificent sledge belonging to the khan, drawn by two Kirghis horses, and we were conducted to the prince's residence.

The ancestors of the khan passed winter, as well as summer, in their kibitkes like other Kirghis people, but his father, in extreme old age, had had a wooden house constructed for him, in which he sought refuge from the rigorous season. The Emperor Nicholas, having a great regard for the present khan and his wife (who had been present at his coronation), caused his present elegant residence to be built for him, but the khan occupied it only in the cold weather, and during summer he preferred leading his usual nomad life. Some steps conducted from the courtyard to the vestibule, whence a staircase led to the first floor, where there was a spacious drawing-room, with four windows, from which we enjoyed an extensive view over the steppe. In this room prayers were said five times a day by the Mohammedans, and there the khan's councillors were received. On the right side of this saloon and of the vestibule there were four rooms, two looking out on the steppe and two towards the court, in one of which, communicating with the best room, the khan remained when at home; the three others were occupied by his wife Fatima. On the left side there were also four rooms, of which the two first, looking out on the steppe, had been assigned to us. In the wings of this building were the secretary's office, the kitchen, and servants' rooms. The apartments were carpeted with handsome Persian carpets, and could boast large mirrors and mahogany furniture. In our room was the piano of the khan's wife, and in Due's room a billiard-table. The khan was a young man twenty-seven years old, courteous, and with a dignified air, and a rather interesting face. His eyes and complexion were those of a Mongol; he had been educated at Astrakan; he spoke and wrote Kirghis (Tartar), Arabic, Persian, and Russian. Charts, and

a celestial globe with Arabic inscriptions, showed that he knew something of geography, and even a little astronomy. His costume was that of an Asiatic: he wore large trousers of violet velvet, with gold lace down the sides, and smart boots of European fashion; a caftan of the same coloured velvet, with gold embroidery down the front and round the edges; a scarf round his waist and a small sword, the hilt ornamented with precious stones. His head, shaven like that of all Mohammedans, was covered with a cap of cloth of gold, bordered with sable. A large gold medallion, containing the emperor's portrait, set round with diamonds, was suspended by a red ribbon round his neck.

The khan came to our rooms every day to see us, chatted with us, and played at billiards with Due. This young man knew perfectly well how to reconcile his dignity as a reigning prince with a certain degree of deference which he displayed to us, as representatives of European science. He caused all sorts of wine (forbidden to Mohammedans) to be brought for us from Astrakan. His Russian cook was skilled in European culinary art; our table was well served, and Karelin assured us that the prince would have joined us at our meals had he not been unwell. The khan's large drawing-room was regarded as the *universal kibitke*, where every peasant had the right to enter, to squat down on the carpet, tell his story, and hear the news of the day, and where he might remain as long or as short a time as he pleased.

At midday a number of wooden bowls were brought in for the khan's councillors, and for the chance guests who were seated along the wall of the room. The prince generally took advantage of this moment to chat a little with everybody. At night they slept on the floor. Upon witnessing these primitive manners and customs one might fancy oneself suddenly transported back to patriarchal times. The nomad peasant does not always obey the orders of his khan. But the prince, in his capacity of judge, supported by his councillors, possesses a little more authority, for they aid him to make their ancient laws and traditions respected. One day I asked the khan whether he gave his decision according to the laws and old rules of the country, or according to his own judgment and his own appreciation of facts. He replied, "Entirely according to my own will." Notwithstanding which, however, he listens to the advice of his councillors.

On the 9th February we quitted his hospitable dwelling with a Cossack officer, who had received orders to accompany us to Astrakan. The khan had wished us to visit a friend of his, a Kalmuck khan, Prince Trumén, residing on an island of the Volga to the north-west of Astrakan, reigning over a race of Kalmucks who people the western part of the Great Steppe, as the Kirghis people the eastern part.

The Kalmucks, as well as the Buretes belong to the Mongolian race. They are contradistinguished from our Circassian race by the form of their heads, by a strongly-marked protruding jaw, by eyes obliquely set, and by a yellow complexion. They are a nomadic tribe, like the Kirghises, and have precisely the same customs. When they quit a pasturage already used up for another where the soil has been uncultivated, they present a very picturesque appearance. As far as the eye can reach, the steppe is covered with flocks and herds. Men on horseback, with quivers well furnished with bows and arrows,

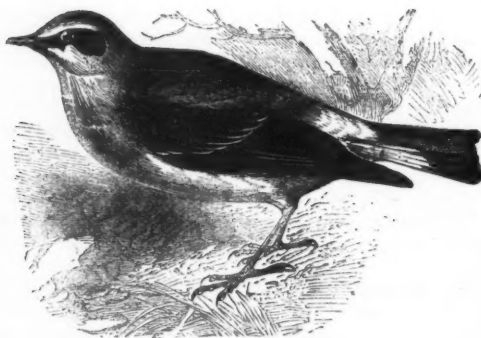
accompanied by their dogs, follow their herds and keep them together. Groups of men on horseback, young women, boys, and girls, make the air resound with their joyousness. Camels carry the matrons and children suspended in baskets on the camels' haunches, felt coverings for their kibitkes, cauldrons, and domestic utensils and provisions. The Kirghises are well skilled in the chase; they eat the flesh of all animals excepting that of the dog, always called by them "the friend of man."

In the afternoon we were conducted to a pretty temple, where we witnessed again a full religious ceremony, in which forty Lamas in their strange paraphernalia took part. We begged to be allowed to see some Kalmuck ladies in national costume. The next morning we were led first into the court, where we were shown some fine horses, and then invited to enter a kibitke, where we beheld twelve ladies seated beside each other, occupying about a quarter of the circumference of the tent. A fire blazed in the centre, and we sat down opposite to them, and so could look at them at our leisure. They were richly dressed in velvets of different colours, but their features were really frightful; they were small and not graceful. The men appeared less ugly, perhaps because one is less exacting with regard to the sterner sex.

For our breakfast we had first of all caviare, and afterwards a genuine Kalmuck beverage (kumis, spirit made of mare's milk) was offered in a porcelain saucer. This beverage resembled thick whey, and had a detestable flavour of bad brandy. Then they offered us several plates of meat, which we found very good. On the 15th February we entered Astrakan, a city remarkable on many accounts, and there we found, after two or three months' anxious expectation, a mass of letters from home and from our native land.

NATURAL HISTORY ANECDOTES.

AN ENGLISH MOCKING-BIRD.



THE WHEATEAR.

THE sprightly, merry little wheatear, so common in most parts of the British Isles, although not gifted by nature with any very great powers of song, possesses the imitative faculty in no ordinary degree. His natural note is by no means melodious, being fairly comparable to the noise of pebbles when

rattled together, mingled with something of metallic sound; but when inspired with the spirit of mimicry, the wheatear can produce as varied an assortment of sounds from his little throat as any bird with which I am acquainted, not even excepting the eloquent and versatile starling.

Like many others of his tribe, the wheatear is migratory in this country, visiting us in large numbers in the spring, and departing again on the approach of winter. The birds seem to pair before or immediately after their arrival on our shores, for when first seen they are usually found dispersed all over the country, invariably in pairs, and always busily engaged in selecting convenient sites for their domicile. That settled, the business of nest-building is immediately proceeded with, and while thus occupied both birds are far too much engrossed with their architectural plans to trouble themselves much about songs or singing. It must be admitted that the male wheatear, easily recognisable by the superior brilliancy of his plumage, is a most confirmed fidget, wasting much valuable time by "fooling around," as our American cousins say; while, as is often the case among bipeds of a higher class, most of the real work of the household is done by his less fussy but really more industrious help-meet. But when the nest is finished—a neatly-built little home it always is—and the master of the house released in part from his arduous labours, he then gives scope to his vocal powers, and amuses his admiring and expectant wife with his celebrated "imitations of popular artists." Perched upon some stone or hillock or heap of turf, conveniently near his well-concealed residence, this small northern mocking-bird reproduces the call-notes of nearly all his feathered neighbours, often with such perfect accuracy as to deceive the most practised ear. Occasionally he interpolates some variations of his own, not seldom mixing up the notes of two or more different kinds of birds in a manner sufficiently ludicrous, but more often the imitation is a perfect copy of the model.

I remember on one occasion spending a most pleasant hour in listening to a musical entertainment, the sole performer being a male wheatear, who was perfectly unaware of the fact that he had a human auditor within a few yards of his *ad fresco* stage. He was trying hard to acquire a perfect mastery of the redshank's note, and his patience and assiduity were most praiseworthy. But unfortunately he had got the call of the ringed-plover very strongly in his head and in his throat, and many rehearsals were necessary before he was able to distinguish properly between the two. He would begin quite correctly with the redshank's note, and then wander off into that of the ringed-plover. Not disheartened by repeated failures, he would try again, generally with the same result. At length, however, he succeeded to his entire satisfaction; and then, as if to test the measure of his skill, he repeated the call-notes of both redshank and ringed-plover alternately half a dozen times without making a single mistake. Thereafter he hopped off his perch, regaled himself with a slight luncheon, and addressed a few casual observations in his own proper language to his wife, of which, however, she took not the slightest notice. Finding his musical efforts unappreciated at home, and having nothing particular to do, he came back to his former position, and resumed the redshank song again. He had it

now pat; and having satisfied himself that such was the case, he went off into excellent imitations of other birds.

On many occasions I have heard the wheatear copy the call-notes of the golden plover, dunlin, peewit, rock-lark, mountain linnnet, chaffinch, and a host of others, besides attempting with fair success the "wild bravura" of the curlew, the softer note of the whimbrel, and the shrill screaming of the oystercatcher. I do not know what the little artist might be capable of if brought up in a cage and trained as bullfinches are. I am happy in never having seen a wheatear in a wire prison, and I certainly have no wish or desire to meet with one of the blithesome little birds in any such sad plight.

T. E.

CROWS' COURTS.

When a boy, "crows' courts" were to me very interesting, especially if so near a stone fence that I could from behind it, through a hole, see their movements, and hear their peculiar talk, so unlike their ordinary utterances.

These meetings seemed convened for the purpose of matching. Towards the close of the meeting, the flock formed into two and two, beginning at the outside and finishing in the centre. As each pair formed by a step from the centre, an open space was finally formed in the centre. When the last crow was matched a moment of silence followed, after which the flock flew away in peace and concord. But if the matching ended in a single crow being left in the centre, that single crow was fallen on and killed. Whether this arose from sympathy with his lonely condition and prospects, or from an impression that he might mar the peace of some settled home, I do not know; but that on attempting to fly away he was knocked down and killed I can bear witness.

Walls, Shetland.

L. F.

METEORIC DUST.

MR. A. C. RANYARD, secretary of the Astronomical Society, has recently called attention to the evidence which our earth's surface affords of her passage through meteoric systems. From a report on the subject in the columns of the "Times" we take the following statement.

Meteoric dust has been collected on the summits of snow-covered mountains. In the snows of Scandinavia and Finland, or those lying far within the Arctic circle, hundreds of miles from any human habitation, particles of meteoric iron have been found. Iron dust has been gathered in ice-holes in Greenland. Nay, in matter raised from the bottom of deep oceans magnetic particles have been detected, which must have been deposited there recently, and can no otherwise have come there save from the air above those oceans, nor have reached that air except from interplanetary space.

It is true that all this might have been confidently foreseen. We know in other ways that meteoric matter is constantly falling upon the earth. Yet there is a strange interest in the actual recognition of this cosmical dust. What Humboldt said of the larger meteoric masses which have fallen visibly upon the earth from interplanetary space is true

(with slight change) of these more subtle signs of the earth's passage through cosmical dust: "Accustomed to know non-telluric bodies solely by measurement, by calculation, and by the inferences of our reason, it is with a sense of wonder that we touch, weigh, and submit to chemical analysis metallic and earthly masses appertaining to the world without."

Until it had been shown that meteors and comets are associated (in some way as yet not clearly understood), the only evidence we could obtain about meteoric systems was by the earth's actual encounter with them. As she circles year by year round her wide orbit, 185,000,000 miles in diameter, her small globe (for in this relation it is almost infinitely minute) encounters such meteors as may happen to be crossing any point of her track at the moment of her arrival there. Multitudes of cosmical bodies may cross that track without her encountering them; and, moreover, for every meteor track which crosses the earth's there must be millions which do not. Thus even of meteor-systems which the earth can, on occasion, encounter, we may remain for ages ignorant, while of those which the earth never can encounter we must for ever remain ignorant, unless we can learn something of them in another way. The astronomer may detect the comet along whose track one of those meteor-systems, "fathomless by man," pursues its course around the sun. Then, though we may never know certainly the nature of that system, we may be able to infer its existence and perhaps form some more or less probable surmise respecting its importance. And from the general evidence collected by astronomers about comets and comet-systems, with such theories as they may hereafter be able to establish respecting the meteoric and cometic nature of certain solar appendages, we may learn the laws according to which the meteor families attending on the sun are distributed.

But it is clear that our knowledge respecting meteors must for a long while be derived chiefly from the study of those meteors which actually reach the earth either as *aërolites*, as fire-balls, or as shooting stars. In other words, our more intimate knowledge of meteors must be limited to those few meteoric systems which cross the ring of space traversed by the earth in her annual motion around the sun. How exceedingly minute the number of systems thus encountered must be when compared with the total number (even supposing the distribution uniform, instead of being, as it probably is, far denser near the sun than at the earth's distance) can be inferred from the consideration that if the earth's track—that is, the ring of space swept by her whole body and its atmospheric envelope—were represented by a circle of wire a yard in diameter, the thickness of the wire would be less than 1-600 part of an inch. Remembering this and also that it is not the whole even of this relatively fine ring in space which is occupied by observers of meteors at any given instant, but only the minute portion of it which the earth at that instant occupies; that the meteors which fall on the sunlit half of the earth are never seen, unless now and then an exceptionally large mass forces its way through the earth's atmospheric envelope; that on the dark or night half of the earth few are on the look out for meteors—we perceive that our knowledge of the meteoric systems in the solar domain must long remain exceedingly imperfect, nay, by comparison with the real vastness of the subject, must be all but evanescent.

But the same considerations which might well make astronomers despair of mastering this difficult subject enhance our wonder at the facts actually ascertained respecting meteor systems encountered by the earth. Already we have evidence that in her circuit round the sun she encounters more than 200 meteor systems, or, more strictly, that she passes through the orbits of so many systems. Again, from calculations based on the average number of shooting stars observed per hour at single stations, Professor Newton, of Yale College, United States, has estimated that in a single year the earth encounters as many as 400,000,000 of meteors, from the largest aërolite down to the smallest body which could be seen in a good telescope as a shooting star, if by chance it passed athwart the telescopic field of view. Without laying stress on the numbers, we may say that, roughly, about a million meteors are gathered up by the earth every day, more than 40,000 per hour, and (on the average, it will be understood) some 10 or 12 per second. As almost all of these bodies enter the earth's atmosphere with velocities compared with which that of a rifle-bullet is as rest, it follows that, however minute the majority of these meteoric visitants may be, the very least of them striking man or animal in any vital spot would cause death. But fortunately we are protected from all risk of this sort by a very efficient shield—the soft and yielding air, the resistance of which turns all save the largest meteors into vapour before they have penetrated even its outermost layers.

The amount of this meteoric deposit, although large, is of such trifling proportion to the earth's bulk, that in a thousand million of years the crust of the earth would not be increased in thickness by many inches.

Varieties.

NIHILISM.—About the origin of this word there is some discussion. Its adoption in Russia is certainly due to its being used by M. Ivan de Tourgueneff in one of his romances. But the word was already familiar in the works of metaphysicians, as where M. Royer Collard speaks of "the scepticism, or *Nihilism*, which characterises the philosophy of these last times." M. Victor Hugo also uses the word in saying, "The denial of the Infinite leads straight to Nihilism." The political Nihilists are supposed to make practical annihilation of all accepted beliefs and authorities. The leaders may propose to reconstruct society after the destruction of existing social order, but the usual end of a political chaos is a despotism and military rule.

BRAILLE SYSTEM FOR THE BLIND.—Every information as to the Braille system will be gladly given by the hon. secretary to the British and Foreign Blind Association, Dr. Armitage, 33, Cambridge Square, Hyde Park, W.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOCUST.—The extensive injury done by this insect led to the appointment, a short time ago, of a Government commission to investigate the subject. Their report, now published, contains much interesting information, of which the following is part. The locust area is of immense extent; it lies between the 94th and the 120th meridians, embracing nearly 2,000,000 square miles. During the years 1874-77, the direct and indirect losses caused by the insect in States and Territories lying west of the Mississippi and east of the great plains are estimated at not less than 200,000,000 dols. The commission have succeeded in mapping the breeding-grounds and districts subject to invasion, and indicating the directions taken by invading and returning armies. As a rule, flight is undertaken only during a part of the day, and in fair, clear weather. The desire for food, cloudy or rainy weather, and adverse winds

may keep the locusts from taking wing. In all flights they rely much on the wind to carry them, usually turning their heads towards it and drifting backwards. With slight winds, however, they use their wings and turn their heads forward. They sometimes travel several days continuously, and several hundred miles. Their velocity varies from three to fifteen or twenty miles an hour, according to that of the wind. It appears they can fly two and a half miles above the general surface of Kansas and Nebraska, and far beyond the keenest vision. This explains their sudden and mysterious appearance in some areas. Two swarms have sometimes been seen moving in opposite directions, one in an upper, one in a lower current. There is a tendency in broods hatched in a visited area to return to the native habitats whence their progenitors came. The laying season is six to eight weeks, the average interval of laying two weeks, and the average number of egg-masses three. About seven weeks are required from hatching to attain full growth, the insect passing through six stages in that time. The locusts are not led by kings or queens. Their preferred food is the various cereals, but they will eat almost anything at a push—even dry leaves, paper, cotton and woollen fabrics, and dead animals. They often strip fruit-trees of their leaves. Blackbirds, prairie-chens, and quail are found to be good locust destroyers. In discussing the uses to which locusts can be put, it is urged that they form an abundant and nutritious article of food. Good broth is made by boiling the unfolded insects for two hours in a proper quantity of water, and seasoned with nothing but pepper and salt. It is said to be hardly distinguishable from beef-broth. Boiled, fried, or roasted, the full-grown make pleasant food, and ground and compressed they will keep a long time. Other uses suggested are as fish-bait, as manure, and as a source of formic acid.

COUNSELS' HONORARIUM.—We regret that some annoyance has been caused by a statement contained in a recent number of this journal, in an article entitled "Legal Anecdotes," that the plaintiff, in a celebrated action of *Swinfen v. Swinfen*, refused to pay her counsel after winning a verdict in her favour. We are assured by the solicitor who acted for the plaintiff in the cause that considerable sums of money were disbursed to the plaintiff's counsel, and we do not doubt that this information is correct. Our assertion as to non-payment was intended to be limited to the document upon which the late Mr. Kennedy brought the action in which he was nonsuited, on the legal dictum that a counsel cannot recover against his client. It is not disputed that such action *was* brought, or that such result was arrived at, and we merely cited the case for the sake of the decision.

BOOKS FOR POOR STUDENTS.—An American paper pleads in behalf of ministers and students for gifts of books that may now be lying idle in the libraries of the wealthy. "Books are to ministers what implements and tools are to other workmen, and the necessity is alike urgent that both classes be supplied with proper instruments. There are books enough stowed away in the garrets of the rich to make glad the hearts of all the missionaries in the world. Why not bring them out and give them a free circulation? In these times it may be easier for some to give books than money. If you have any old volumes stowed away on the top shelf, or hid out of sight behind others of more elegant binding, bring them out and give them to the Lord for some of his faithful servants. Many a pastor will go without needed clothes and live on a scanty allowance of food and scrimp his family in order to save enough to buy books. Cannot the reader of this paragraph brighten the life of some poor struggling pastor or student by contributing to his library? A book that you care nought for may be of value and service to him."

MUSICAL COPYRIGHT.—The question of music copyright has been curiously enforced upon the management of the London Sunday School Choir. This body, of whom Sir Andrew Lusk is the president, had a concert at the Crystal Palace last June, when they sang Mr. Stallybrass's arrangement of the old French tune or song, "The Comrades' Song of Hope." No notice was taken of the matter, although it has transpired that Mr. Curwen held a copyright of this particular piece. This spring nearly 2,000 of the singers belonging to the choir performed at the Royal Albert Hall, and the piece was re-demanded for its excellent delivery. This seems to have been objected to by the copyrightists, who wrote to the manager demanding to know how many books had been sold, how many were left, and also enforcing the payment of a fine for using this arrangement of the old song. Remonstrances and the pleading of innocence in the matter were useless, and the fine had to be paid accordingly.